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Toxic Waters: Ibrahim Hazboun and the Struggle for a Dead Sea Concession, 1913- 1948

Jacob Norris

Surrounded by desert hills just thirty-nine kilometers east of Jerusalem, the highly toxic waters of the Dead Sea famously lie at the lowest point on the earth's surface and are retreating to an ever deeper level each year. In 2008 the lake's surface was measured at some 420 metres below sea level and was found to be receding at a rate of one meter per year.¹ Part of the reason for this rapid shrinkage is the enormous chemical plants that today stand on both the Israeli and Jordanian-controlled shores of the lake, exporting the minerals they extract from the Dead Sea water to all corners of the globe for use in fertilizers, pharmaceuticals and beauty products.² It is the historical origins of this industrial activity that are explored in this article – origins that can shed important light on the way in which Arab Palestinians experienced imperial development in the early twentieth century.

In 1930, the British Colonial Office signed a formal agreement with Moshe Novomeysky, a Jewish Russian mining

*Motor boat in transport to the Dead Sea,
Matson collection, Library of Congress.*

engineer from Siberia and committed Zionist, creating Palestine Potash Ltd (PPL). This company was given exclusive rights over the extraction of mineral salts from the Dead Sea for a period of fifty years and was the predecessor to today's Israeli enterprise, the Dead Sea Works (DSW).³ Reading through Novomeysky's memoirs, as well as the handful of Israeli histories of the Dead Sea industry, the concession appears as a hard-won Zionist victory in the face of stiff opposition within British parliamentary circles. From this point, the formation and subsequent success of PPL is described as an important early stage in the attempt to build up a national chemical industry in the state of Israel.⁴ Arab Palestinians are almost entirely invisible in this story, save for Novomeysky's occasional mention of PPL's "friendly relations" with Arab communities in the area.⁵ Focusing on the story of Ibrahim Hazboun, a Catholic merchant trader from Bethlehem, this article will retell the story of the Dead Sea concession from a local Arab perspective, employing a variety of sources, both written and oral, to fill in the gaps left by the colonial and Zionist archives. Contrary to the claims of British and Zionist officials, it will be shown that Arab Palestinians had been intensely interested in exploiting the riches of the Dead Sea since the end of Ottoman rule, and they continued to express their interest throughout the Mandate period. Weaving Ibrahim's personal story into the bigger picture of national opposition to the Dead Sea project, it will be argued that this neglected historical episode can serve as a window onto the wider problems facing the Arab merchant classes during the transition from Ottoman to British rule in Palestine.

Returning to Bethlehem in an age of imperial development

In 1913 Ibrahim Hazboun was living in Haiti as part of a sizeable community of Syrians or "Turcos" whose numbers at that time have been estimated to be as high as 15,000.⁶ Born in Bethlehem in 1878, he had spent much of his childhood travelling the world with his father and uncle, staying for extended periods in France, Italy, the United States, El Salvador and Costa Rica.⁷ He came from one of those merchant Levantine families whose trading connections had become increasingly globalized in the late nineteenth century. With members of an extended family stationed in virtually every continent, regional client bases were built up over time and eventually incorporated into transcontinental commercial networks. The Hazbouns had long operated along these lines, creating a global empire of their own in the nineteenth century under the family business *Sharikat Hazboun* which specialised in the sale of household items, especially clothing and furniture. Sometime in the first decade of the twentieth century Ibrahim decided to settle in Haiti where he successfully established a new outpost for *Sharikat Hazboun*, dealing in furniture he imported from Europe, especially France.

By 1913, however, Ibrahim was preparing to leave Haiti and return to the land of his birth. It is likely this decision was partly motivated by political circumstances in Haiti where a rising tide of anti-Syrian sentiment was being whipped up by the

country's nationalist politicians. When the president, Cincinnatus Leconte, was killed along with several hundred soldiers in a bomb attack on the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince, blame quickly fell on Syrian political groups.⁸ In this climate of hostility towards the Arab immigrant population, Ibrahim hastily prepared for departure. Shortly before leaving the Caribbean in 1913 he married his girlfriend Marie Luciani, a woman from Santo Domingo in the neighbouring Dominican Republic, and arranged the necessary paperwork for their journey to Bethlehem.⁹

Equally as important in determining Ibrahim's return to Bethlehem was the attraction of economic opportunities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Like many Arab immigrants in the Americas (the *mahjar*), Ibrahim would have viewed the post-1908 Ottoman era not as the dying days of an empire in terminal decline, but as a time of widened horizons for Arab participation in civic life.¹⁰ Alongside the constitutional reforms of 1908, the Ottoman state had long been extending its reach into the Syrian provinces of the Empire, laying down new routes of infrastructure in order to integrate this potentially lucrative region more closely with the imperial center.¹¹ From the construction of a new harbour in Beirut that began in 1887 to the laying down of railway and telegraph lines that criss-crossed their way between the great centers of Syrian trade from the 1860s onwards, Ottoman modernization projects opened up new spaces for local merchants as contractors, developers and operators of public concessions. This was particularly the case during Abdülhamid II's reign as Sultan (1876-1909) when a deliberate policy was implemented of favoring local merchants over foreigners in order to create stronger ties of loyalty among the Empire's Arab subjects.¹² Historians' descriptions of this process do not normally extend into southern Syria (Palestine), but clearly entrepreneurs in and around towns such as Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem benefited from the same Ottoman practices. The spate of Ottoman-instigated railway building at the turn of the century included the Jaffa-Jerusalem line (inaugurated 1892), and a new branch of the Hejaz railway that ran to Haifa and opened for business in 1905. These projects, and many others like them, involved a high degree of local participation as witnessed by the likes of Joseph Navon and Joseph Amzalak, the Sephardi Jewish cousins who ran the Jaffa railway, or the Beirut notables, Dr Fakhouri and 'Abdel Nour Effendi, to whom the Ottoman government awarded a concession in 1912 to develop the Tiberias hot springs.¹³

Most relevant to Ibrahim Hazboun was the increasing interest of the Ottoman state in the Dead Sea, both as an economic resource in its own right and as a conduit for trade. An early landmark in this process was the construction of a new road between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, opened in 1898 to coincide with the state visit of the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II.¹⁴ As Eugene Rogan has documented, the road formed part of a wider extension of Ottoman infrastructure, aimed at opening up the eastern side of the Dead Sea to greater trade with Palestine. These new installations included a bridge over the River Jordan just north of the Dead Sea and two new roads linking Salt (in modern-day Jordan) to Jerusalem.¹⁵ Meanwhile, as early as 1888 Ottoman teams had been prospecting for asphalt at the Dead Sea and the Porte later commissioned a number of expeditions, both locally and internationally organized, to determine the

commercial viability of extracting minerals from the lake, in much the same way oil prospecting was simultaneously taking place in the Mosul Vilayet.¹⁶ By 1911 Sultan Mehmed V had issued a *firman* (imperial charter) for the extraction of bromine from the Dead Sea to three Ottoman subjects, Djindjöz Bey, Zuad Bey and Djenab Chehabeddin Bey – a concession that would later come back to haunt British and Zionist development at the Dead Sea.¹⁷ Eager to ensure the immediate commencement of work at the lake, Mehmed had included in the *firman* of 1911 the condition that exportation of bromine had to start within two years of the concession officially coming into force. By the beginning of 1915 the concession holders had failed to initiate production, leading the Porte to issue an *irade* (imperial decree) annulling the concession on 19 January.¹⁸

It was against this backdrop that Ibrahim Hazboun became interested in the commercial value of the Dead Sea shortly after his return to Palestine in 1913. Situated a short distance from Bethlehem, the Dead Sea had become an important Ottoman military station upon the outbreak of World War I. Here the Ottomans profited from a pre-existing transportation business, run by Hussein al-Husseini of the notable Jerusalem family, whose barges had long been ferrying foodstuffs and other goods across the lake, especially from the grain-rich Kerak region on the eastern side. As the Ottoman army turned its attention to countering the Allied threat from Egypt, the Dead Sea trade routes came to represent a vital line of supply for troops stationed in Palestine, leading the Ottoman military governor in Syria, Jamal Pasha, to commandeer al-Husseini's business for the war effort.¹⁹ From 1915 onwards the Ottoman army began to effect major change on the landscape, building a harbor on the western bank of the lake and then expanding the Dead Sea fleet by transporting several ships and barges overland from the Mediterranean, mobilizing hundreds of Arab sailors and laborers in the process.²⁰

The potential of the Dead Sea as an economic resource would therefore have been clearly visible to an aspiring local entrepreneur such as Ibrahim. Initially finding work as a tax collector for the provincial government, he quickly began to make enquiries regarding the possibilities of establishing a mineral extraction plant at the lake.²¹ Finding a way to gain influence in the higher echelons of Ottoman government, however, was no easy task and Ibrahim was certainly not alone in expressing an interest in such a project. Equally interested in a Dead Sea concession in this period was the al-Husseini family who considered themselves entitled to expand their commercial operations at the lake once the war ended.²² Amid this great expansion of activity around the Dead Sea, Ibrahim took advantage of a chance encounter with Jamal Pasha to press his credentials for a mineral concession. According to family legend, the Pasha was passing through Bethlehem en route to Jerusalem from Hebron when one of the wheels of his carriage broke on the bumpy road. Hearing the news, Ibrahim rushed to the scene, arranging for the wheel to be taken to a local mechanic and inviting the Pasha into his home while they waited. Grateful to Ibrahim for his hospitality, the Pasha listened to his plans for the Dead Sea, agreeing to meet him at his Jerusalem residence to discuss the matter further.²³ Following this second meeting

Ibrahim was given a managerial role in the Ottoman transportation operations at the Dead Sea. According to Ibrahim's surviving relatives, he was awarded this wartime position on the understanding that it would lead to a mineral concession upon the conclusion of the war.²⁴ In reality, it is unclear exactly what the Pasha promised Ibrahim, or what his motivations were in offering him a managerial position at the Dead Sea. Perhaps he merely made a vague commitment in order to secure Ibrahim's short-term help in running the wartime ferry service. Or perhaps he saw the Bethlehemite as the ideal candidate to initiate the extraction of minerals from the lake in the post-war period. Whatever the exact nature of Ibrahim's agreements with the Ottoman authorities, his ambitions at the Dead Sea can be situated within the heightened interest among Arab merchant classes in profiting from imperial development in Palestine during this period. The Hazboun family was representative of this wider trend. Between the years 1910 and 1925, dozens of members of the extended family returned from life in the diaspora to set up new businesses in Palestine.²⁵ They invested heavily in property in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, as well as around Jaffa and Beit Dajan where they bought several orange groves from which they exported the "Hazboun" brand of Jaffa oranges to Europe in the 1920s and 30s.²⁶

While historians have typically viewed this inbound Arab migration to Palestine as a result of the advent of British rule and the new economic opportunities it presented, it is clear that the process was already in motion by the time the Mandate began. Stories such as that of Ibrahim Hazboun demonstrate that there is no clear dividing line between the British and Ottoman periods as far as Arab migration is concerned, and the early twentieth century needs to be viewed more generally as an era of great change and modernization in Palestine. French historians such as André Raymond and Robert Ilbert have long described a process by which cities across the Eastern Mediterranean were integrated into the world economy in the nineteenth century through a subtle interplay between autonomous local actors and the integrating drive of the imperial state.²⁷ By the beginning of the twentieth century it is clear this "jeu subtil"²⁸ between Ottoman planners, local merchants and European financiers was also playing out in Palestinian cities such as Jaffa, Jerusalem and Haifa, and that merchant migrants such as Ibrahim Hazboun were returning to claim their share of the profits.²⁹

British rule and the end of Arab opportunity at the Dead Sea

The coming of British rule initially seemed to continue and even accelerate these processes as a wide range of migrants descended upon Palestine in search of new opportunities. At the Dead Sea it quickly became apparent that the new British regime was equally intent upon exploiting the lake's commercial possibilities. Once general Allenby's troops gained control of the lake in the winter of 1918 a research team was quickly dispatched to survey the area. Led by the Canadian geologist Major Brock, the expedition reported favourably on the potential for "a large and profitable industry" at the Dead Sea.³⁰ In particular Brock's report focused on the large deposits of potash



Transporting grain from the Dead Sea, *Matson collection, Library of Congress.*



Unloading grain on the north shore, *Matson collection, Library of Congress.*

(potassium chloride) found in the lake's waters – a mineral increasingly used in the production of agricultural fertilizers. Up to this point Britain had been dependent on Germany for its supplies of potash, meaning the prospect of extracting the mineral from the Dead Sea was extremely appealing to imperial enthusiasts such as Brock: "to the Empire as a whole a successful industry of this kind would be invaluable, for it would not only ensure a permanent supply of cheap potash, essential for agriculture and other industries, but make us independent of any foreign source."³¹ As government departments in Whitehall began to formulate their plans, it seemed as if there might be a place for Ibrahim Hazboun at the Dead Sea. The government's immediate priority in the aftermath of World War I was to continue using the lake as a supply line that could ease the problem of food shortages. For this reason Ibrahim was urged by the government's chief administrator to continue running ferries across the lake, importing cereals into Palestine from the Kerak region. Ibrahim now found himself operating a commercial transport business, propped up by the new British regime which sold him two of the military's motor boats stationed at Jaffa for 6,000 Egyptian pounds (LE) and leased him a plot of land at the north-western end of the lake, near today's settlement of Kalia.³²

But for Hazboun and many Arab entrepreneurs like him, British rule quickly proved to be a disappointment. The plurality of the "Ottoman Commonwealth"³³ was fast disappearing in Palestine as the government in London set about reshaping the region along ethno-national lines. Britain's decision to facilitate the establishment of a "Jewish national home" in Palestine had far-reaching consequences for the old Arab merchant classes who now found themselves squeezed out of their former role as the operators of public works concessions and government development projects. Underlying Britain's Zionist policy was the deep-seated belief that European Jews were better suited to play the role of Palestine's merchant middlemen, acting as the catalyst for a new era of development and industrialization in the "Middle East". This approach was outlined in the terms of the Mandate itself, as agreed at the League of Nations in 1922: "The Administration may arrange with the Jewish agency mentioned in Article 4 to construct or operate, upon fair, and equitable terms, any public works, services and utilities."³⁴ In contrast, no mention was made of the thousands of Arab businessmen, many of them returning from the *mahjar*, who sought to profit from imperial development schemes.

As the 1920s wore on, it became increasingly difficult for the old Arab merchant classes to secure government contracts. The Beiruti merchants, mentioned above, who had secured the Tiberias hot springs concession from the Ottoman government in 1912 found this out the hard way. Initially the British mandatory government extended their concession, but when a Jewish company expressed an interest in the springs in 1925, the government's chief secretary cut short the original concession.³⁵ In 1932 a Zionist enterprise, the Tiberias Hot Springs, opened to the public, symbolizing the shifting balance of forces south of the British-French mandatory border.³⁶ It was this same ordering of labour along preconceived notions of "ethnic suitability," prevalent all over European colonial empires, that Ibrahim encountered once he began to push the

British administration for a Dead Sea mineral concession. In all his correspondence with the British government, as well as in the recollections of his surviving relatives, Ibrahim stressed he was running the motor boat business purely as a stepping stone to achieve his larger goal of “a concession for the extraction of salt and potash from the Dead Sea” (*imtiyāz istikhrāj al-milḥ wa-l-būtās min al-baḥr al-miyyet*).³⁷ But in London plans were already underway to award a concession to Moshe Novomeysky who had begun to express his interest in the Dead Sea after moving to Palestine in 1920.³⁸ Initially the Jerusalem government did everything in its power to keep Ibrahim’s transport business afloat, eager to deter other potential developers from establishing a presence at the Dead Sea. By 1920, however, a reduction in wheat traffic between Transjordan and Palestine had left Ibrahim struggling to meet the repayments on loans he had been encouraged to take out with the Anglo-Egyptian Bank to purchase the government’s boats. According to Ibrahim’s attorney, the government director of commerce and industry, Mr Harari, promised Ibrahim during this period that he would be granted a salts concession as soon as the British Mandate was formally ratified by international treaty.³⁹ In consultation with the high commissioner, Harari also arranged for the Anglo-Egyptian Bank to loan Ibrahim a further LE 3,500 backed by a government guarantee. Ibrahim therefore continued his work at the lake, paying a further LE 5,600 to the government for equipment needed to keep the business running.⁴⁰

In the meantime, Novomeysky set about trying to purchase Ibrahim’s business as “a way to establish myself legally on the Dead Sea” and in the summer of 1921 Ibrahim began receiving instructions from the Jerusalem government to accept the Russian’s advances.⁴¹ Eager to clear his rising debts, Hazboun signed an initial agreement with Novomeysky on 12 July, by which he would be paid a fee of LE 1,600 and have his debts to the Anglo-Egyptian Bank transferred to Novomeysky. The agreement also stipulated Ibrahim would continue his involvement at the Dead Sea, assuming a managerial position in the transport company with a monthly salary of LE 80.⁴²

But from Ibrahim’s perspective the matter was far from settled as Novomeysky delayed on the initial payment of LE 1,600 and subsequently sought to lower the overall price of purchase. By April 1923 Novomeysky had reduced his offer to LE 11,500, of which only LE 1,500 would be paid in cash with the remaining sum to be paid in shares which were, according to Ibrahim, no longer worth the value assigned to them by Novomeysky.⁴³ In reality, Novomeysky was an evasive figure during this period, spending most of his time in Europe, seemingly content to let the matter drag on in the hope that Ibrahim would be declared bankrupt. According to Ibrahim’s attorney, Novomeysky twice took action against him for bankruptcy in 1923, both times unsuccessfully, while at the same time avoiding Ibrahim’s repeated requests to conclude a final agreement.⁴⁴ Nowhere are these claims contradicted in the records of the Mandate government, nor were they denied by Novomeysky, whose memoirs mention the affair only very briefly, describing an agreeable transaction that resulted in “three satisfied parties” – the government, Hazboun and Novomeysky.⁴⁵

For Ibrahim, however, the reality was highly unsatisfactory. As the Anglo-Egyptian Bank applied increasing pressure in 1924 and 1925 for the repayment of his debts, the administration in Jerusalem reneged on its verbal promises of protection. In the summer of 1924, an Arab construction company based in Jerusalem, Kattan and Sons, intervened on Ibrahim's behalf, offering to repay his debts in exchange for the right to extract salts from the Dead Sea. Despite the enthusiasm of the attorney general in Palestine for this offer, a telegram from the colonial secretary in London instructed the Jerusalem government to reject the Kattan approach on the grounds that it would "involve alienation of ground which might be of importance to a chemical enterprise on the Dead Sea".⁴⁶

Facing an increasingly desperate financial struggle, Ibrahim obtained several interviews with the assistant governor of Jerusalem in which he attempted to garner government support with his loan repayments.⁴⁷ Upon the failure of these efforts, he requested the dispute be referred to a board of arbitration. When this was in turn rejected, his attorney announced he was suing the government for LE 16,000 of damages incurred since he was first sold the boats by the government in 1917.⁴⁸ Ibrahim's debtors were closing in, however, and on 19 October 1925, the Anglo-Egyptian Bank informed the chief secretary in Jerusalem it was "taking steps to liquidate the assets of Hazboun existing at the Dead Sea," and asked the government if it had any objections to such actions.⁴⁹ This is the last mention of Ibrahim Hazboun to be found in government records. His relatives, meanwhile, recount the story of his subsequent journey to Europe where he attempted to have his case heard at the High Court in London and the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague.⁵⁰ Both attempts ended in failure and it must be assumed his property at the Dead Sea was liquidated, allowing Novomeysky to acquire the lease of Dead Sea land, along with the transport business, at his reduced offer.⁵¹ Little is known of Ibrahim's plight over the next ten years or so, but it is clear that by the late 1930s he had regrouped his finances sufficiently to be able to rent a plot of land near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Etzion, a short distance to the southwest of Bethlehem, where he cultivated a vineyard. But his dreams of achieving entrepreneurial success in Palestine had evaporated and he made a modest living from this point on, producing wine and arak from the grapes he grew.⁵²

Contesting the Dead Sea at a national level: the struggle for Dead Sea "treasure"

The Palestine government's cynical treatment of Ibrahim Hazboun is indicative of the wider British disinterest in giving Arab enterprise a lead role in colonial development projects in Palestine. In his correspondence with the Palestine government, Ibrahim continually framed his transport business within the longer-term project of extracting salts from the Dead Sea. He also outlined plans for a number of other commercial schemes, employing the same language of development so often found in British

Balfour's Declaration

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

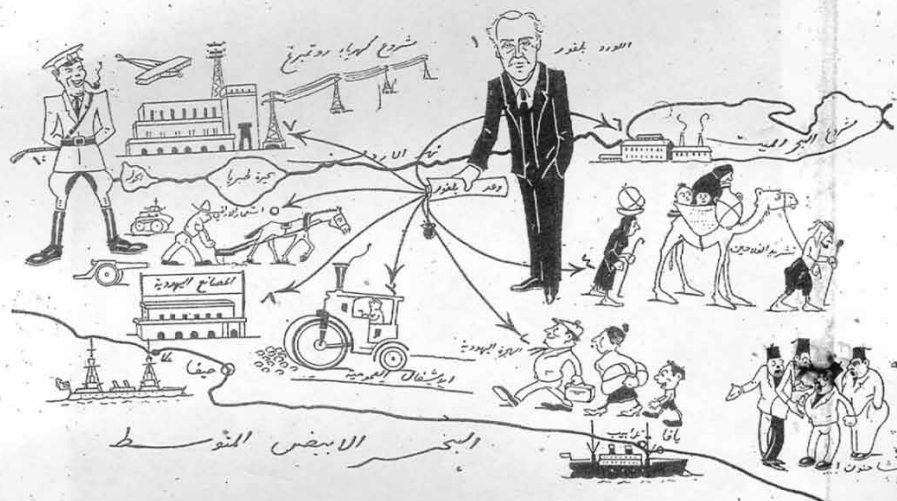


لورد بلفور صاحب الوعد المشؤم

وعده بلفور

«ان حكومة جلالة الملك تنظر بارتياح الى ائتشاء وطن قومي للشعب اليهودي في فلسطين وتستخدم احسن مجهوداتها لتسهيل اتمام هذه الغاية. ومن المفهوم جليا انه سوف لا يعمل بشيء يمكن ان يمس بحقوق الطوائف غير اليهودية الموجودة في فلسطين المدنية والدينية، والحقوق والقوانين السياسية التي يتمتع بها اليهود في بلاد اخرى»

بلفور وما نجره وعده المشؤم من الولايات على فلسطين



(١) بلفور في هذه الصورة في الذكرى الثانية لصدور وعد بلفور الذي نص على جعل فلسطين وطنا قوميا لليهود وبدان وضعا في سالات الاقتصادية وسياسية تتيح هذا الوعد الذي ترك البلاد من فسادها وبعدها يمشي في ارضها اليوم وهي حالة عزلة تدمي القلوب وتدعو الى اليقظة والتشبه (٢) هناك ساحل فلسطين وحل شامل، يافته باخرة انزل فلسطين مهاجرين جدد من اليهود دلا على ان الهجرة اليهودية لم تنقطع وان ابواب البلاد ما زالت مفتوحة امام اليهودي الشتر مدقة امام المهاجرين العرب الفلسطينيين الذين يودون الرجوع الى بلادهم فلا يسع لهم الا مدحة ترمز الى الطريق الجديدة التي تتفتح وتبديون للتسمرات اليهودية لوصفها مع بعض مميزاتهم الذين يتألقون في الؤدة الى القرى والبلدات العربية خربوا غمر تلكا، والهم الذي يجب ان يبلغوا ان الاشغال المماثلة في البلاد عند استولى اليهود عليها يضل وعد بلفور ايضا (٣) صورة دمية للاح يودي يملع الارض بعد ان استلمها من جبة الكارون كابت وطرد العرب منها (٤) البحر الميت وقد اقيم مجاريه بناء لشركة توليد وتولوس يرمز الى ازدياد المامل اليهودية في البلاد وعائلاتها يتوجهونها افراق اسواق العراق ومصر وسوريا ولبنان وفلسطين وتترك الارادوت التي بما يدل على طموح اليهود الى الاستيلاء على اراضي البلاد العربية التجارية ان لم يكونوا قد استولوا بعد على اكثرها (٥) صورة دمية للاح يودي يملع الارض بعد ان استلمها من جبة الكارون كابت وطرد العرب منها (٦) عملة السككينة التي تدار في الاردن التي تار بواسطتها مدحت فلسطين وقد استندت امتيازها شركة وتوابعها اليهودية (٧) منزل يودي المند يترج على تيل هذه لآلة مسروبة من تقياد وعده بلفور وحوله وسائل الحرب والقتال من مدافع وديارات وطاقات وباراج حربية اقتضت السياسة الجائرة بناء قاعدتين، لما في جيبا على حساب اهل فلسطين، ولا علم من الذي ساعد على تحقيق هذا الوعد المشؤم ام انكيز ام العرب ابناء البلاد؟ هذه هي الحالة المزرنة التي وصلت اليها البلاد ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله

colonial correspondence: namely the importance of utilizing modern science to render the natural world more productive. His plans included an agricultural scheme to develop 60,000 dunams of land in the plains between Kerak and Amman: "I am prepared to introduce modern agricultural machinery...and cultivate a great part of the said land which shall yield plentifully".⁵³ He belonged to that merchant class of Palestinian Arabs who had foreseen great economic opportunity under British rule, only to find that it was European Jews who had been earmarked as Palestine's international tradesmen and operators of public works concessions. The company that attempted to save Ibrahim from bankruptcy in 1924, Kattan and Sons, was another Bethlehem family business with trading connections all over Europe and the Americas. But there was no place for these merchants in Britain's Dead Sea plans which were being formulated far away in the corridors of Whitehall where Zionists were better placed to prove their scientific and economic worth.⁵⁴

Despite much opposition in both Palestine and the British Parliament, Novomeysky was finally awarded the Dead Sea concession in 1930 and PPL began production in 1932.⁵⁵ The Dead Sea industry would prove to be an important asset for both British imperial goals and the Zionist national economy. As far as Britain was concerned, the company played a crucial role in breaking the old reliance on German supplies of potash. This was most vividly demonstrated during World War II when the government was able to redirect Dead Sea exports to British Empire countries. By 1944 over half of Britain's potash and 75 per cent of its bromine (PPL's other major product) was being drawn from the Dead Sea.⁵⁶ Elsewhere in the Empire, PPL's share of the potash market leapt from 10.75 per cent in 1939 to 80 per cent in 1944.⁵⁷ For the Zionist movement, meanwhile, PPL was an important step towards the creation of a national Jewish industrial economy in Palestine. By the time Chaim Weizmann came to write his autobiography in 1949, he considered the Dead Sea project as one of the key Zionist achievements of the interwar years: "Nahalal, Deganiah, the University, the Rutenberg electrical works, the Dead Sea Concession, meant much more to me... than all the promises of great governments or great political parties."⁵⁸

During the Mandate period, British officials and politicians frequently explained their preference for Zionist enterprise by claiming that Arab Palestinians had little interest in initiating such projects. As Winston Churchill famously informed the House of Commons in 1921, the Arabs of Palestine "would have been quite content to dwell – a handful of philosophic people – in the wasted sun-scorched plains, letting the waters of the Jordan continue to flow unbridled and unharnessed into the Dead Sea."⁵⁹ The story of Ibrahim Hazboun, and others like him, stands as an important corrective to this colonial narrative that is still so central to the Israeli national story today. Indeed Ibrahim was not the only Arab Palestinian to repeatedly request a Dead Sea concession. When speculation was growing in 1927 over Zionist involvement in the concession Jamal al-Husseini, relative of Hussein al-Husseini and one of the leading political figures in Palestine, wrote to the high commissioner in Jerusalem and the colonial secretary in London. He claimed that the first applicant for the concession had been a member of his family and the former mayor of Jerusalem, Musa Kazim al-

Husseini, who had applied to the government of Transjordan in 1923. The letter went on to state:

Since the year 1923, the Palestine Arab Executive Committee, representing the majority of the inhabitants of Palestine, have repeatedly, verbally and in writing, made it clear to the authorities concerned that the inhabitants whom they represent have the urgent desire that the Dead Sea undertaking and all other such undertakings that involve the natural wealth of the country should be nationalized...under such conditions fit to gain the endorsement and support of the inhabitants who are the natural owners of that wealth.⁶⁰

Jamal al-Husseini was most likely unaware that Novomeysky had been in secret negotiations with the Colonial Office since 1920, but Musa al-Husseini's application for a concession in 1923 is nonetheless highly plausible given his family had profited so greatly during the late Ottoman period from the transport business they operated across the Dead Sea. A reading of the Palestinian Arabic press from the same period suggests this desire to participate in development at the Dead Sea was widely shared among the Arab political classes. Dozens of newspaper articles denounced the British decision to award the concession to Novomeysky as a "robbery" (*sariqa*) and "stolen treasure" (*kanz masrūq*). Some of these articles highlighted PPL's confiscation of land and resources used by the local Arab communities to make way for the new industrial sites. In February 1937, for example, the Jerusalem-based daily, *al-Liwa*, drew attention to the loss of Bedouin land in the Beersheba district, reporting that the secretary of the Arab National Council in Beersheba, Rashid Aska, had made a speech denouncing PPL's dispossession of the Azlam tribe from its land.⁶¹ Meanwhile in 1940 *al-Iqdam* drew attention to the ongoing dispute over access to water at Ghor al-Safi on the Transjordanian side of the Dead Sea. Under an agreement signed the previous year, PPL was authorized to derive water from the Umm al-Hashim channel, provided the farmers of Ghor al-Safi were left with adequate supplies for their agriculture. According to *al-Iqdam*, "the water of the channel is not sufficient anymore for the requirements of the farmers," leading them to lodge a complaint with the Land Department in Amman.⁶²

Most of the articles, however, viewed the Dead Sea through the wider lens of national struggle against the British-Zionist presence. Newspapers such as *al-Difa'* declared the "Robbery of sixty thousand dunams of land by a Jewish company",⁶³ while the Jaffa-based paper *Falastin* ran numerous articles on the Dead Sea, constantly framing the issue within an anti-imperialist discourse. When the fifteenth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration came around in November 1932, for example, *Falastin* included the Dead Sea project in its front-page cartoon depicting "Balfour and the woes inflicted on Palestine by his fateful declaration" (*balfūr wa-ma jarahu wa 'dhu al-mash'ūm min al-wailāt 'ala filasṭīn*).⁶⁴ This cartoon, reproduced on p.34, caricatured on a map of Palestine the ten greatest "woes" (*wailāt*) caused by Britain's support for Zionism, including the "Rutenberg electricity project" (top

left), the “Jewish factories of Haifa” (bottom left) and a colonial official representing “the British king and emperor of India who watches over this tragedy” (middle left). Clearly marked at number six in the top right-hand corner of the map was the Dead Sea project which, as stated in the explanation beneath, was “run by Tulloch [Novomeysky’s partner] and the Jewish Novomeysky who have taken the concession for the extraction of salt and minerals and the treasures contained within them!” This front-page feature demonstrates the increasingly central position being assigned to natural resources in Palestinian national politics in this period. As another newspaper, the Haifa-based journal *al-Nafir*, summed up in 1930: “Palestine is at present a poor country. The Dead Sea salts give her the potentiality of being one of the richest countries. But these riches are not yet in her own hands.”⁶⁵

The toxic waters of the Dead Sea in the age of national conflict

What is striking about British government records is the extent to which these protestations fell on deaf ears. Government officials were aware of Arab protests over the Dead Sea development, but they chose to ignore them.⁶⁶ Indeed there is not a single instance in which any Arab involvement in the management of the Dead Sea development is contemplated by a government official. As the protests of political leaders such as Jamal al-Husseini demonstrate, this was not due to a lack of interest from the Arab community in running the concession. Rather it reflected the closure of an era in which a merchant class of Jews, Arabs and Europeans could all compete for the spoils of imperial development in the Eastern Mediterranean. The more rigid divisions of national politics were beginning to take shape in Palestine, supported by a British government that explicitly sought to award public works concessions to Zionist enterprises.

Inside PPL itself, these same divisions quickly took shape during the 1930s. Unlike many other Jewish industries in Palestine, Novomeysky employed unskilled Arab labourers at the two PPL plants. This proved to be a source of great irritation to the Jewish trade union federation in Palestine, the *Histadrut*, but it also gave PPL access to a large pool of cheap, local labour.⁶⁷ These were the manual workers who numbered around 300 during peak seasonal demands for casual labour, making up around half of the total PPL workforce at that time.⁶⁸ They were drawn largely from the towns and villages surrounding the Dead Sea, especially Jericho in the north and the Transjordanian village of al-Safia at the southern plant.

In contrast to the idyllic image of Jewish-Arab co-existence presented in Novomeysky’s memoirs, life as an Arab employee of PPL was fraught with tension and hardship.⁶⁹ The Dead Sea industrial plants were organised along the principle of segregation. In this system the Arab labourers were segregated from their Jewish colleagues and discriminated against on every level. They lived in a separate “camp” in units which were smaller and of lower quality than the Jewish accommodation. These were described in a company report as “primitively timbered huts,” consisting

of “wooden planks which have been covered with tin sheets from petrol tins.”⁷⁰ The systemic separation was reinforced through diet with Arab laborers fed “meals prepared in the oriental fashion in a separate kitchen.”⁷¹ Meanwhile Arab wages were consistently around half of those received by Jewish manual laborers and Arabs were excluded from the company’s recreational and educational activities as these were all in Hebrew.⁷² When protesting the disparity in wages at the Dead Sea in December 1930, the Arabic newspaper *Mi’rat al-Sharq*, posed the question: “to whom can the Arab laborer complain?”⁷³ Until 1947, the answer was nobody. In his study of labor relations in Mandate Palestine, Zachary Lockman explains in a footnote how, after years of resisting any attempts to organize PPL’s Arab workforce, the *Histadrut* eventually recruited them in 1944 in an effort to pre-empt its rival, the Palestine Arab Workers’ Society (PAWS). But when PPL responded by firing some of those Arab workers who enrolled, the *Histadrut* found itself in a paradoxical position. Rather than contradicting its wider goal of “Hebrew labor,” the *Histadrut* withdrew its support for the fired workers, and it was not until 1947 that Arab trade unions organized any representation for the Arab employees of PPL, just one year before the company’s termination.⁷⁴ For the vast majority of PPL’s existence, therefore, Arab workers had no trade union support at the Dead Sea, ensuring their wages and working conditions remained well below those of Jewish workers.

Given the working conditions of the Arab labour force, the potential for unrest was considerable. This was reflected in the heavy security measures taken by PPL to protect its Jewish workers, particularly at the more isolated southern plant.⁷⁵ A sense of danger is evoked in the PPL correspondence whenever the Arab workforce is mentioned and, despite Novomeysky’s claims to the contrary, Arab employees at PPL supported and aided the rebel bands operating in the area during the rebellion of 1936 to 1939. In January 1939 the Jewish workers at the southern plant wrote a highly concerned letter to Novomeysky, stating that “the Arab workers...speak frankly of their sympathy with the bands,” going on to give evidence of their support to local rebels. The letter also listed a series of potentially disastrous scenarios, including the possibility of Arabs poisoning the local spring water and an attack on the isolated factory at the southern works: “The Arabs working in the factory would, in such a moment, certainly be a serious danger from inside.”⁷⁶

In this atmosphere of fear and suspicion, PPL’s geographic position in the east of Palestine near the Transjordanian border was a cause of great concern for its Jewish management as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 approached. In a memo written to the UN in 1947, Novomeysky beseeched the General Assembly to consider altering the boundaries of its proposed partition of Palestine so that the PPL headquarters at Kalia on the northern shore of the Dead Sea would be included in the proposed Jewish state. Given that the General Assembly was due to vote on the partition plan just one month later, Novomeysky wrote with great urgency, stressing the superior ability of Jews to run such a technical operation: “It is feared that a newly constituted Arab state, with a primitive economy, whose political objectives would not necessarily be the full development of the country’s resources, might hamper and restrict the Company’s

operations to the damage of the interests of Palestine as a whole.”⁷⁷

But in the new Middle East that was emerging from the wreckage of the British Mandate, Zionist industrialists like Novomeysky could no longer rely on Britain to enforce their role as agents of development. When full-scale war broke out in May 1948, PPL’s northern plant found itself on the wrong side of the new border dividing the Israeli and Jordanian armies. In April the mandatory government had ceased providing armed escorts to the PPL convoys travelling the Jerusalem-Jericho road as British troops and policemen began to be evacuated from Palestine. Now exposed to attack on all sides, Novomeysky frantically attempted to use his good relations with King ‘Abdullah to negotiate the creation of a neutral zone around the Dead Sea. However, his efforts were in vain and on 19 and 20 May Kalia and the neighbouring kibbutzim were evacuated by a special fleet of small boats commanded by the Palmach (the elite Zionist military unit), under the orders of David Ben-Gurion. As a parting shot the fleeing Jewish population made sure to sabotage the factory’s equipment, rendering useless to any future Arab enterprise.⁷⁸ When the Arab Legion arrived at the site on 22 May they found a deserted wasteland, already vandalized by the local Arab population, that would barely have resembled Novomeysky’s prized “oasis of civilized life.”⁷⁹

The Dead Sea was now cartographically dissected, with the southern half under Israeli control and the northern half inside the state of Jordan, leaving no space for a shared Jewish-Arab story of post-colonial development. The lake would be re-divided several times in the following decades, but the British dream that Jews would lead a pan-Middle Eastern march towards industrial modernity lay in ruins among the rubble of the PPL buildings at Kalia.

Many other dreams also lay in ruins as the result of Britain’s refusal to entertain Arab participation in its development projects. Among the thousands of Palestinians, both Jewish and Arab, who lost their lives in the conflict of 1948 and 1949 was Ibrahim Hazboun, killed sometime between May and July 1948, along with his sister and two nephews in the fighting that enveloped the area around Kfar Etzion.⁸⁰ Ibrahim had returned to Bethlehem from Haiti in 1913 a relatively wealthy man, anticipating a new age of economic opportunity in Palestine. By the end of the British Mandate his dreams of entrepreneurial success were a distant memory as he eked out a modest living cultivating his vineyard. The exact circumstances of his death remain shrouded in mystery. It is possible he had joined the Arab Legion’s attack on the nearby kibbutz which resulted in the death of Arab as well as Jewish fighters, and ended with the infamous events of 13 May 1948, when between 120 and 160 Jews were massacred.⁸¹ Or perhaps he was merely caught in the crossfire of that brutal war, trying to protect the little property he had left. Ibrahim was survived by a single daughter, Olga ‘Abdrabbu, whom he had raised alone after the death of his wife, Marie Luciani, in 1932. Members of the Hazboun family living today in Bethlehem and the United States tell the story of how Olga tried for many years after 1948 to gain ownership of Ibrahim’s old boats at the Dead Sea from the Israeli authorities, but all to no avail.⁸² To all intents and purposes, traces of her father’s business at the Dead Sea had

disappeared from the Israeli records, save for a handful of the letters he wrote to the Mandate government in the 1920s now buried among the files of the State Archives in Jerusalem – an awkward footnote in a new story of Jewish national development at the Dead Sea.

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Endnotes

- 1 See Shahrazad Abu Ghazleh, Jens Hartmann, Nils Jansen and Stephan Kempe, "Water input requirements of the rapidly shrinking Dead Sea," *Naturwissenschaften*, Vol. 96, No. 5 (May 2009): 637-638.
- 2 The partial responsibility of the mineral industries for the environmental problems at the Dead Sea is argued in *ibid.*, 637.
- 3 The full concession agreement is found in the Israel State Archives (ISA) RG16/M/8/9.
- 4 See Moshe Novomeysky, *Given to salt: the struggle for the Dead Sea concession* (London: Max Parrish, 1958). No historical work in English or Arabic describes the creation of PPL in any detail, although Barbara Smith gives a brief description of the concession in *The roots of separatism in Palestine: British economic policy, 1920-1929* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1993) 126-129. To date the only monograph in Hebrew that covers the topic is Dov Gavish, *Salt of the earth: the struggle for the Dead Sea concession* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1995).
- 5 See for example Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 277-278.
- 6 Across Latin America, Syrian and Palestinian immigrants were referred to as 'Turcos' (Turks) as they mostly arrived as Ottoman subjects. For the size of the Syrian immigrant community in Haiti see Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Race, nationality and trade in the Caribbean: the Syrians in Haiti, 1903-1934," *The International History Review*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Oct., 1981): 518.
- 7 The following biographical information has been gleaned from a variety of sources: Interviews conducted with Yousef Hazboun (Ibrahim's first cousin), Bethlehem, 23 and 24 June 2010; correspondence with Nasri A. Hazboun and Raphael Hazboun (nephews of Ibrahim resident in the United States); interviews conducted by Mike Salman with other relatives of Ibrahim and recorded in his article, "Ibrahim 'Abdullah Hanna Hazboun Sahib imtiyaz istikhraj al-milh min al-bahr al-miyyet fi al-'asr al-'uthmaani', *Beit Lahm* (published in Bethlehem by the Antonian Charitable Society 1997-1998): 98-100.
- 8 Plummer, "Race, nationality and trade in the Caribbean," 532-535.
- 9 Salman, "Ibrahim 'Abdullah Hanna Hazboun," 98.
- 10 A number of historical works have documented the heightened political and economic opportunities for Arabs in the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the 1908 constitutional reforms. Among the best studies are Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Leyla Dakhli, *Une génération d'intellectuels arabes: Syrie et Liban, 1908-1940* (Paris: Karthala, 2009), 15-30.
- 11 As recently described in Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, architecture and the city: French-Ottoman encounters, 1830-1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).
- 12 For this process at work in Beirut, see Marwan R. Buheiry, "The rise of the city of Beirut," in Marwan R. Buheiry and Lawrence I. Conrad, *The formation and perception of the modern Arab world* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1989), 486; and Jens Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut: the making of an Ottoman provincial capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 90.
- 13 For Navon and Amzalak's involvement in the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway see Anthony Travis, *On chariots with horses of fire and iron: the excursionists and the narrow gauge railroad from Jaffa to Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2008), 122-132. For

- the Tiberias hot springs concession see the discussion among British Mandate officials: director of commerce and industry to chief secretary, 1 Dec. 1922, ISA RG16/M/8/11.
- 14 The Ottoman construction of the road is mentioned briefly in the 1927 *Financial Times* article, "Beginning of Industrial Era for Palestine," that describes the Kaiser's visit as "his melodramatic Eastern tour." The National Archives (TNA), London, CO 733/132/3.
 - 15 Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the state in the late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 63.
 - 16 Among the expeditions authorised by the Ottoman state was a Zionist-sponsored mission led by Professor Max Blanckenhorn of the University of Marburg, Germany, in 1904. According to PPL reports, the mission of this expedition was to provide "a basis for the granting of a concession by the Turkish government for the commercial exploitation of all mineral resources of the Dead Sea and of its shores." See PPL report on the history of the Dead Sea chemical industry, p. 28, ISA RG127/C/984/23. For the asphalt prospecting see Rogan, *Frontiers of the state*, 189. Ottoman-sponsored oil prospecting in Mosul began in 1895, as described in Edward P. Fitzgerald, "France's Middle Eastern ambitions, the Sykes-Picot negotiations and the oilfields of Mosul, 1915-1918," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Dec., 1994): 700-701.
 - 17 Described in Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 108-109. The rights to this original concession were bought by an international group of businessmen in the 1920s who later filed a lawsuit against the British government. This eventually resulted in a hearing at the British High Court in 1934 that was won by the government.
 - 18 Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 108-109.
 - 19 Described in Ibrahim Hazboun's correspondence with the British authorities. See letter from Hazboun's attorney, O.I. Murr, to chief secretary, 2 July 1925, in ISA RG16/M/8/8.
 - 20 Related in the diaries of Wasif Jawhariyyeh, discussed in Salim Tamari, "Jerusalem's Ottoman modernity: the times and lives of Wasif Jawhariyyeh," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Issue 9 (summer 2000): 24-26.
 - 21 Information provided by Nasri A. Hazboun and Raphael Hazboun.
 - 22 Related in Jamal al-Husseini to high commissioner, 31 Aug. 1937, TNA CO 733/132/4.
 - 23 See Salman, "Ibrahim 'Abdullah Hanna Hazboun," 98-99.
 - 24 Interviews with Yousef Hazboun.
 - 25 Yousef Hazboun, for example, relates the return of his father, a wealthy furniture dealer in France, to Bethlehem to the onset of British rule. Interview conducted 24 June 2010.
 - 26 Information provided by Nasri and Raphael Hazboun.
 - 27 For examples see André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985); and Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie, 1830-1930: histoire d'une communauté citadine* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1996). For more recent English language works that are explicitly influenced by this approach, see Hanssen, *Fin de siècle Beirut*; and Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman city between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
 - 28 Phrase used by Raymond in *Grandes villes arabes*, 38.
 - 29 Several recent works have examined this process. For Jaffa see Ruth Kark, *Jaffa: a city in evolution, 1799-1917* (Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1990). For Jerusalem see Roberto Mazza, *Jerusalem: from the Ottomans to the British* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009). For Haifa see Mahmoud Yazbak, *Haifa in the late Ottoman period, 1864-1914: a Muslim town in transition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
 - 30 R. W. Brock, "Potash from the Dead Sea," 7. A copy of the report is included in TNA CAOG 14/123.
 - 31 Ibid.
 - 32 Related in Hazboun to chief secretary, 1 July 1924. ISA RG16/M/8/8.
 - 33 A phrase coined by André Raymond in *Grandes villes arabes*, 38.
 - 34 Article 11, "Council of the League of Nations Confirmed Text on the Terms of the British Mandate in Palestine, 24 Jul., 1922," reproduced in *Documents on Palestine. Vol. I, 1900-1947*, ed. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, (Jerusalem: Passia, 2007) 109-113.
 - 35 See Symes to Amery, 14 Aug. 1925, ISA RG16/M/8/11.
 - 36 The opening of the springs is described in Sandra Sufian, *Healing the land and the nation: malaria and the Zionist project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 49.
 - 37 As quoted in Salman, "Ibrahim 'Abdullah Hanna Hazboun," 99. Letters from Hazboun to the British government requesting a mineral concession are found in ISA RG16/M/8/8.
 - 38 Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 11.
 - 39 Memo titled "Hazboun vs. Palestine Government," 3, attached to letter from Hazboun's attorney, O.I. Murr, to chief secretary, 2 July 1925, in ISA RG16/M/8/8.
 - 40 See president of chamber of commerce (Jerusalem) to high commissioner, 13 June 1924, ISA RG16/M/8/8.

- 41 See Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 20.
- 42 The full agreement is included in ISA RG16/M/8/9.
- 43 Richmond (for chief secretary) to British representative in Amman, 18 Sep. 1922, ISA RG16/M/8/9.
- 44 "Hazboun vs. Palestine Government," 8, ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 45 Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 21.
- 46 Telegram from Colonial Office to high commissioner, 20 Aug. 1924, ISA RG16/M/8/8. For the opposite view held by the attorney general see attorney general to chief secretary, 6 July 1924, *ibid*.
- 47 Hazboun to chief secretary, 1 July 1924, ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 48 The deliberations of the chief secretary and the Palestine attorney general over Hazboun's legal challenge can be found in the minutes dated 27 July 1925, in ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 49 Anglo-Egyptian Bank manager to chief secretary, 19 Oct. 1925, ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 50 Interviews conducted with Yousef Hazoun, 23 and 24 June 2010. The same story is also recounted by other relatives of Ibrahim Hazboun in Salman, "Ibrahim 'Abdullah Hanna Hazboun," 100.
- 51 The figure paid by Novomeysky may have been even lower as the Anglo-Egyptian Bank was recommending in October 1925 that "the best course to adopt is to sell [Hazboun's assets] at public auction." Anglo-Egyptian Bank to the Palestine government director of commerce and industry, 19 Oct. 1925, ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 52 Interview with Yousef Hazboun, 24 June 2010.
- 53 P.8 of memo (not dated) signed by Hazboun, ISA RG16/M/8/8.
- 54 Novomeysky describes the close relations he enjoyed with Colonial Office officials in London in *Given to salt*, 255.
- 55 Novomeysky, *Given to salt*, 254.
- 56 Data taken from "The World Potash Industry and the Dead Sea," 31 Aug. 1945, ISA RG18/C/978/17; and *Minerals Yearbook*, 1939, quoted in Earl of Lytton to Kingsley, 7 Aug. 1940, TNA, Department of Inland Revenue (IR) 40/9803.
- 57 *Ibid*.
- 58 Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and error: the autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper, 1949), 338.
- 59 House of Commons Debate (H.C.Deb.), 4 July 1922, Vol. 156, Col. 335.
- 60 Al-Husseini to colonial secretary (date not given, but among other letters from 1927), TNA CO 733/132/4.
- 61 "Beersheba protests against Jewish Palestine Potash Company," *al-Liwa'*, 28 Feb., 1937.
- 62 "The inhabitants of Ghor and the Potash Company," *al-Iqdam*, 25 Aug. 1940. This article is found with an English translation in the PPL company files. See ISA RG127/C/984/15.
- 63 *Al-Difa'*, 12 April 1937.
- 64 *Falastin*, 2 Nov. 1932.
- 65 *Al-Nafir*, 15 Dec. 1930.
- 66 A collection of Arab media cuttings in the PPL archives indicate the awareness of Arab opposition to the Dead Sea project. See ISA RG127/C/983/21.
- 67 The *Histadrut's* opposition to PPL's employment of Arab labour is described in Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and enemies: Arab and Jewish workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) fn.85, p.414.
- 68 See "Life of the employees at the potash works," 51, ISA RG127/C/984/23.
- 69 Novomeysky's brief but idyllic descriptions of his Arab workforce are found in *Given to salt*, 276-278.
- 70 See the section of the PPL company report titled "Life of the employees at the potash works," 51, ISA RG127/C/984/23.
- 71 "Life of the employees at the potash works," 51, ISA RG127/C/984/23.
- 72 For the rates of pay see "The Dead Sea," *Mir'at al-Sharq*, 24 Dec., 1930; and Lockman, *Comrades and enemies*, p.414. For the exclusively Hebrew cultural activities see 'Life of the employees at the potash works', p.50, ISA RG127/C/984/23.
- 73 "The Dead Sea," *Mir'at al-Sharq*, 24 Dec., 1930.
- 74 Lockman, *Comrades and enemies*, fn.85, p.414.
- 75 Jewish workers complained in 1939 about the lack of protection they were given. PPL responded by employing a permanent security force at the southern plant in 1939. See Dead Sea South to Novomeysky, 9 Jan. 1939, ISA RG127/C/982/8.
- 76 Translation of letter in Hebrew from Dead Sea South to Novomeysky, 9 Jan. 1939. ISA RG127/C/982/8.
- 77 Novomeysky, "Memorandum submitted to the ad hoc committee on the Palestinian question of the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of Palestine Potash Limited" 28 Oct. 1947, 6, ISA RG127/C/984/23.
- 78 See the draft PPL report describing events at the company up to 1949, entitled "Palestine Potash Ltd" p.1, ISA RG127/C/984/20.
- 79 Novomeysky quote from *Given to salt*, 281.
- 80 Related in interviews with Yousef, Nasri and Raphael Hazboun.
- 81 The events at Kfar Etzion are described in Benny Morris, *The road to Jerusalem: Glubb Pasha, Palestine and the Jews* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 135-138.
- 82 Interviews with Nasri and Raphael Hazboun.